

## Sensei

A docent and a *sensei* to many who have become *sensei* in their own right is Dr Ilza Veith. Her article on the "Parallels between AIDS, Leprosy and Syphilis" is a feature of this issue of the *Journal*; it is based on a lecture she gave at the Hawaii Medical Library on 28 June 1991. She is the Professor *Emerita*, History of Health Sciences and Psychiatry, UC-San Francisco.

Dr Veith, 77, was a visitor to Hawaii in mid-June and was honored by a reception arranged by John Breinich at the Hawaii Medical Library on 19 June.

Veith can be addressed as "Doctor" because she has not only a doctorate in medical history from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, but she was also tendered the honor in Japan of *Itagaku Hase*, or Doctor of Medical Science, a title superior to that of a simple MD. However, she has never been a practicing physician, although she started out to be one.

She was born in Ludwigshafen-am-Rhein in Germany, decided to become a physician, headed for schools in Geneva and then Vienna in the 1930s. She married a physician, Hans von Valentini, before receiving her degree, and he did not feel it was right for a doctor's wife to be a physician, too. Consequently, she attended cooking school!

The couple avoided the Nazi *Anschluss* by coming to the United States in 1937. She earned her PhD at Johns Hopkins in the History of Medicine—the first student ever to receive that degree—under the tutelage of Professor Sigerist. Her doctoral thesis required her to learn Mandarin Chinese, which she did by learning the use of 500 characters at the end of one year. The thesis became the subject of her first of 8 books that she has since written: *The Yellow Emperor's Classic on Internal Medicine*; it has sold 50,000 copies, an unusual record because few doctoral theses see the light of day. Veith is very proud of the fact that she spent 15 years as a faculty member at the University of Chicago School of Medicine, which she considers to be one of the great institutions of this country. She later accepted an offer of the University of California, San Francisco, that set up a chair in the History of Medicine especially for her. It was at her feet that Hawaii's Charlie Judd Jr MD (now deceased these 5 years) developed such an interest in the history of medicine. He brought it back with him to our own medical school and inculcated appreciation of it to the students who have graduated from JABSOM.

Veith is now the victim of a hemiplegia that she suffered unexpectedly at the age of 50, but this has neither hampered her getting about—she has made trips all over the world to fulfill speaking engagements—nor has it kept her mind from being as sharp as ever. She has suffered additional tragedies as well: one was the loss of her husband a year ago after more than 50 years of marriage.

The other was an accidental fall and a leg fracture that led to Hawaii's good fortune, and perhaps also Ilza's, because it led to

her developing a large number of friends and many visits here. It happened during a stopover in Honolulu on her way to Australia to speak. She was hospitalized at The Queen's Medical Center, under the care of Don Jones the attending orthopedist, but more intimately acquainted with Resident Yoshio Oda MD; the late Harry Arnold Jr MD and many others also became her close friends. Of course, the planned trip was canceled.

However, Veith has a particular fondness for Japan, in particular Tokyo and Kyoto, which she has visited many times and for whose people she has a great fondness. She speaks Japanese, Chinese, German, French, English and even Russian "nimmshoko"—very little. How come? "Because it was a neighboring country to Germany; that's why!" she said, when asked the question.

Veith is the author of *Great Ideas in the History of Surgery*, *Can You Hear the Clapping of One Hand?*, *Art Is Medicine*, *Medizin in Tibet* (in German), *A Translation of the Earliest Medical Book*, *Ishimpo* (2 volumes) and *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* (in addition to the *Yellow Emperor*). She is, of course, listed in *Who's Who*.

Many of her friends came to greet Ilza Veith at the Hawaii Medical Library, and it was an honor for your editor to be able to meet this *sensei* of all *sensei* — a teacher of physicians.

J I Frederick Reppun MD  
Editor

## ERRATUM

A real gremlin, this time! We can't find it; not at the HMA where the *Journal's* sharp-eyed proofreaders Susanne and Jan thought it was added by ye editor, whose handwriting they thought it was (it wasn't!).

David Elpern's piece on *Iniki* in the October issue ended with a poem by G.M. Hopkins but ...

The gremlin added to the ending five lines from P.B. Shelley's "Ozymandius!"

*Mea culpa.*

The editor